MR. PUCCINI'S LATEST OPERA

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break down, asks, "Would old dog Tray remember me?" What can be done with old dog Tray? Nothing, of course. "I mio cane mi ravisserà?" That is the libretto equivalent. Presently comes the hysterical outburst of *Larkens*.

"Say, boys, I'm homesick and I'm broke and I don't give a damn who knows it. I want to go home again. * * * I want old Pennsylvany. I want my folks I'm done!" Now here is the Italian:

Non reggo più.
Non reggo più ragazzi! Son malato.
Non so di che. Mandatemi!
Ah, mandatemi via! Son rovinato
Son stanco de piccone e di miniera
Voglio l'aratro, vo' la mamma mia.

That is as near as an Italian can come to it. "Son rovinato"—"I'm ruined." Then the excellent English gentleman who made the translation from the Italian for the libretto reads that "I'm stony!" and "I'm sick. I don't know of what." It is a lame attempt at the true Belasco thing. *Sonora* gives the *Girl* dust and says: "Here, Girl, clean the slate out o' that." The Italian reads "Tira una riga sul mio conto"—"Make a mark on my account." What were the poor librettists to do? In the second act *Johnson* hints that *Minnie* might become lonely up in her mountain home, and she has the most poetic speech in Mr. Belasco's play. Here is the Belasco version:

"MINNIE. Lonely? Mountains lonely? Ha! Besides I got a little pinto an' I'm all over the country on him * * * finest little horse you ever throwed a leg over. If I want to I can ride right down into the summer at the foothills with rules of Injun pinks just laffin', an' tiger lilies as mad as blazes. There's a river there, too; the Injuns call it 'Water Road'; an' I can get on that an' drift an' drift, an' I smell the wild syringa on the banks * * * Mm' * * * An' if I git tired o' that I can turn my horse up grade an' gallop right into the winter an' the lonely pines an' firs a-whisperin' an' a-sighin'. Oh, my mountains! My beautiful peaks! My Sierras! God's in the air here, sure. You can see him layin' peaceful hands on the mountain tops. He seems so near you want to let your soul go right on up.

Now here is the Italian version:

Oh, se sapeste
Come il vivere e allegro'
Ho un piccolo poliedro
che mi porta a galoppo
laggiu per la campagna
per prati di giunchiglie,
di garofani ardenti,
per riviere profonde
chi profumun le sponde
gelsomini e vainighe'
Poi ritorno ai miei pini
ai monti alla Sierra
cosi al cielo vicini
che Iddio passando pare
la sua mano vincini, &c

which is, being translated:

Oh, you've no notion
How exciting my life is'
You should see my little pinto.
See him carry me at a gallop,
Right down beyond the foothills.
Thro' meadows full of lilies,
All ablaze with golden jonquils
Then I drift down the river,
Scented all along its banks
With jessamine and wild syringa
When I'm tired I go back
To my mountains, my Sierras, &c

It was not possible for the poor librettists to get hold of that Belasco talk, and if they had done so it would have been buried by a musical setting.

Of course there are devices to give the musician opportunities to write solos. The scene between *Rance* and *Minnie* in the first act is padded so as to give the former a solo beginning "Minnie, dalla mia casa son partito." In the second act a hymn to the Sun God is introduced and is sung to the squaw. But it is unnecessary to enter into an account of every detail of this kind. The second act remains substantially the same as it is in the drama. The third act, as already indicated, is wholly rearranged, and the short fourth act of Mr. Belasco is omitted.

The main objectives of the librettists in the final act appear to have been *Rance's* solo, "Minnie, ora piangi tu," *Johnson's* "Oh' olla mi creda libero" (beautifully set in Mr. Puccini's finest melodic vein), and the pleading of *Minnie* which ushers in the finale, the most ambitious concerted music of the entire opera.

Mr. Puccini's musical plan is both comprehensive and complex, but no more intricate than that of his "Tosca." He confides to the orchestra the duty of painting a panoramic tone picture, while the actors carry on a dialogue constructed chiefly on the lines of that melodious recitative familiar to us in the other works of this maestro. There are no set musical pieces, except one in the first act, where a song is used in the original drama, and the finale of the opera. When occasion offers for a long speech the composer writes an extended melody, but such melodies are not numerous, nor are they forced into undue prominence in the general plan.

There is some employment of the solo voices in the formal harmony of ensemble or concerted number, but only in the one or two passing fragments which develop naturally in the action of the play and in the conclusion. In other places the illusion of general conversation is attempted. The orchestration is designed to furnish a large background of shifting color, and to this end the composer employs a formidable array of instruments.

The score calls for a piccolo, three flutes, three oboes, English horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contra bassoon, four horns, three trumpets, four trombones, two harps, glockenspiel, celeste, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, triangle, fonica (an arrangement of bells in B, E and B, the first B being that below the treble clef) and the usual body of strings. The instruments are here named as they stand on the page of Mr. Puccini's score. The composer divides his strings into small bodies very frequently, in some places arranging both firsts and seconds in groups of three. Solo violins, sometimes one and sometimes two, are also required.

In addition to this great use of instrumental tints Mr. Puccini has enriched the orchestral tone painting by the employment of extended compound rhythms, by many unexpected and even startling changes of rhythm, and by some peculiar treatment of percussive effects. For example, in the stress of the exciting second act he utilizes his sonorous bells merely to increase the complexity of the orchestral tints and to add a deep poignancy to the accents. There is nothing in the situation that refers to bells, and they are not employed as they usually are in opera, namely to provide a sound heard in the play. They are here introduced solely as an orchestral factor, and with no small dramatic effect.

The composer has gone further in this work than in any of its predecessors in the employment of what are called modern harmonies. But Mr. Puccini has a musical plan of his own. His themes are in themselves mostly as frankly diatonic as the tunes of Verdi. But the harmonization is such that the musical background is crowded with the tonalities so dear to the advanced school of composition. The chord of the diminished seventh sinks into the state of a bald and shopworn commonplace. The ear feeds upon clashing seconds, upon ninths, augmented fifths, upon whole tone progressions, and occasionally upon groups which sound as if they might best be played upon a piano with the flat of the hand.

Intense point and incisiveness is thus given to some themes which might otherwise appear to be tawdry. The building of the plan is most skilful. Everything is done with a certain distinguished individuality which belongs to Mr. Puccini. Novel to the ear as his latest manner seems, it is still Italian. Nor should it be understood that there is in his fundamental ideas anything far forward of "Tosca" or "Butterfly." It is in his harmonic and instrumental treatment that he has made his steps, and these steps he undoubtedly regarded as called for by the nature of his new undertaking.

The composer has made use of representative themes in much the same manner as he did in his "Tosca," though in this work the themes are somewhat more elaborate and some attempt has been made to give some of them a local or racial color. He has themes for every one, even the Indian. *Billy Jackrabbit*. These themes are iterated and reiterated throughout the score in the familiar manner, but there is no attempt at those extraordinary polyphonic blends which Wagner uses when two thoughts work together or in opposition, nor is there any thematic development in the symphonic style which the Bayreuth master adapted to the purposes of dramatic delineation. It is not important that all these themes should be enumerated and named. It is sufficient for the present purpose to note the principal motives as they appear.

The opera opens with a brief introduction in C major, four-fourth time, allegro non troppo, 34 measures. It is built chiefly on the "Redemption" theme, which is used throughout the drama to typify the salvation of the renegade *Johnson*. This theme is rapidly worked up to a fortissimo, and the prelude comes to a crashing end with four measures of "ragtime" pealed out by the brass. This is the *Johnson* motive, and it is used significantly in one or two places in the play. Why *Mr. Johnson* of Sacramento should live in ragtime is a matter which need not be discussed now.

After a pause, during which the curtains open, the opera begins in E major, six-eighth time, moderato. The "boys" are heard shouting outside, and at the ending of the fourth measure the oboe sings a theme, which may be called that of *Minnie's* pleading. After the beginning of Act I it rests in silence till *Minnie* in the last scene goes from "boy" to "boy" pleading for *Johnson's* life, and then it is allotted to her voice. Certain episodic themes are heard in the development of a brisk orchestral movement while men of the camp boisterously enter. They sing a quaint minor refrain to the ancient words "Dooda day." This is heard again in the last scene when the boys learn that *Johnson* has been caught.

The first elaborated lyric moment in the drama is reached when *Jake Wallace*, the camp minstrel, is heard singing in the distance. Then begins the homesickness melody already referred to. This is worked up after *Wallace's* entrance, with solos for several minor characters and an ensemble, accented by a rhythmic hammering of fists on tables.

The number is interrupted by the hysterical outburst of *Larkens*, and brought to its end after his exit with a clever employment of the old device of singing with closed mouths. This homesickness theme is rather subtly introduced again just at the end of the school scene, and still again in the closing measures of the opera when *Minnie* and *Johnson* are going away.

A quarrel between *Sonora* and *Rance* is worked up with much orchestral bustle and the entrance of *Minnie*, who interrupts it, brings with it a very poignantly harmonized theme which may be called the *Minnie* motive. It recurs frequently in more or less modified forms. After this the next new music is heard in the school scene. Here *Minnie* has a good solo.

The arrival of the pony express brings a bit of scenic music, and a reference to the road agent causes a return of the *Johnson* ragtime theme in the strings. Presently, when the "boys" have left *Minnie* and *Rance* alone in the bar, we hear a new melody, which we afterward find is closely related to the true love theme of the opera. *Rance's* is the false love. This has a touch of flavor which the composer intended to be American. Curiously enough one phase of it is strongly reminiscent of a clearly cut phrase in Ethelbert Nevin's once popular "Narcisse."

The ensuing duo between *Minnie* and *Rance* contains some pieces of extended melody in Puccini's characteristic manner and is one of the effective passages of the opera. *Johnson* enters abruptly to his own theme. When he is leaning on the

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